

Upcoming Events

Business Meeting: March 10 at 4:30 p.m.

Ladies Bible Class: March 17

Panera Bread Open Bible Study: Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Hebrews class Thursdays at 11:00

Encouragement from God

“For I am the Lord your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’” Isaiah 41:13

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”
Romans 5:3-5

March Birthdays

4 Joseph McKnight 8 Drina Zamarripa

9 Jessica Aguiar 18 Buddy Cashion 30 Barrett Hoffman

March Anniversaries

6 Harold & Dortha Gentry

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.

Sunday.....10:45 a.m.

Sunday.....6:00 p.m.

Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher:

Mike McKnight

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Indio Informer

Vol. 30 No. 9

March 3, 2019

Growing in Trials

By Michael McKnight

“One day you have it, the next day it’s gone.” That is what a family friend said to my wife and me as she described watching her home burn to the ground. She had left earlier that morning with three of her four children running an errand when she got the call from her mother who lived around the corner, “I think you need to go home, your house is on fire.” She arrived before the fire department to find her husband and oldest son of eleven standing outside in their pajamas. They barely made it out alive. Just like that their world is turned upside down. Everything was gone, except for the clothes on their backs and a few things in their vehicles.

This past month I have had the blessing to experience tragedy through the eyes of friends. To counsel, comfort, support and share in the reality of what we hope will never happen to anyone. Yet, in all of these things our family has been able to gain such valuable perspectives. Watching first-hand what loss can look like, the struggle of faith and questioning God and eventually the valuable lessons that can only come from enduring this type of struggle.

In the immediate aftermath, there was thanksgiving to God that no one was seriously hurt. Then sets in the reality of what comes next. As a husband, how does one provide for his family when he has no resources to fall back on and no idea what his next step should be? As a mother, how will she comfort and bring hope to her children when she has no clue where they will stay that night, not to mention the weeks or months to come. Hard realities came rushing in and swallowed up any positives of the moment. As I listen to

my friends relate their struggles, I had to push back the fearful thoughts of what if this was me? What if it was me who was standing in my pajamas watching everything I had worked for being consumed by a ravaging fire? Real life is shockingly different from watching tragedy on the television.

I could not help but consider the nation of Israel as they experienced the blessings of God being led to safety through the Red Sea and then witnessing the enemy destroyed in front of them. Afterwards came the testing in the wilderness. One reality after another. No water. No food. Exposed to the elements and unable to defend themselves against the mighty nations surrounding them. Not knowing what will happen next or where they are headed, Israel was made to face the truth: they had no long-lasting resources. God humbled His children in such a way that they would learn what we all have to learn: we can turn to Him in reliance or we can rely on our own understanding and turn to the enemy and be slaves. To be honest, I had never really appreciated the struggles Israel experienced in the wilderness until now. I had minimized their humanity in being disciplined by the Lord until someone close to me was faced with a similar reality.

Here is the beauty of what came from all of this. As the Lord continually provided for His children then, so did our friends receive provisions. Day by day, little by little, their lives have slowly improved. It hasn't been easy, and much time has been spent on bended knees in prayer; not to mention many conversations of reassurance and big picture perspectives. I've witnessed the goodness and generosity of people coming from places you would not expect. Through our friends' real hardship, I've seen God send His kindness and blessings by the hands of others. Family, friends, strangers, employers, community. Door after door has been opened for them way beyond coincidence as each day's needs have been supplied. It wasn't as obvious as water gushing from a rock or manna and quail from heaven 6 days a week; but the providence and power of the Lord is undeniable. And because the focus has been directed towards the Lord

continually, we have been "able to see" Him providing. Nothing encourages more than honest observation of God at work!

Each day, God's presence in our lives can be seen too. We do not need a tragedy like this one to see Him at work. In Romans 8, Paul states that the Lord causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose. God is affecting our faith each day. Allowing us to be tested, allowing us to be humbled. Bringing about blessings and opening doors that seemed shut. Supplying the opportunities for each one of us to witness His desires for our continual growth and the maturing of our faith. The question then becomes, are we too occupied by our daily schedule to see Him at work for our good? I hope not.

I pray that each one of us is expanding our understanding of God's love for us. So great a gift He has given us to live in the Spirit and not according to the flesh. I pray that each one of us cry out to Him "Abba Father" as we consider the great gift of adoption we have received. The offering of His Son and our continual transformation is Him working for our good.

May the Lord continue to bless each one of us as we diligently seek Him.

Encouragement

"One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement. It is easy to laugh at men's ideals; it is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word." – William Barclay –